

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 /104 W

-----121789 181406Z /64

R 171315Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1173

INFO /AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 514

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

/AMEMBASSY PARIS 376

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

COMIDEASTFOR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCPAC

CINCPACFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 1224

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PGOV, PBOR, ASEC

SUBJ: THE PRIME MINISTER REVIEWS THE POLITICAL SCENE

REF: DJIBOUTI 1223

1. SUMMARY. DJIBOUTI PRIME MINISTER IS AGAIN OUT OF THE COUNTRY, THIS TIME ON A TRIP TO KOREA; HOWEVER, BEFORE HIS DEPARTURE, HE REVIEWED LOCAL POLITICAL SCENE WITH CHARGE. HE IS PLEASED WITH GRADUAL RETURN TO MIDDLE GROUND OF PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED IN HIS ATTITUDES TOWARD LOCAL ETHNIC PROBLEMS. KAMIL BLAMES FRANCE, AND INDIRECTLY THE U.S., FOR NOT ACCELERATING THE PROCESS.

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2. PRIME MINISTER ABDALLAH MOHAMED KAMIL AND HIS WIFE LEFT DJIBOUTI ON EVENING 15 AUGUST FOR AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO KOREA. WHEN CHARGE MET WITH KAMIL EARLIER THAT DAY, THE PRIME MINISTER WAS APOLOGETIC ABOUT THE TRIP, SAYING THAT HE HAD ACCEPTED IT TOO QUICKLY AND THAT HE REALLY HAD TOO MUCH WORK IN DJIBOUTI. HE HAD ONLY BEEN BACK FROM THE KHARTOUM OAU AND

BELGRADE NAM FOR ABOUT THREE WEEKS BEFORE THIS TRIP. NEVERTHELESS, DURING THAT PERIOD, HE HAD AMPLE OPPORTUNITY TO CATCH UP ON THE LOCAL SCENE.

3. DJIBOUTI IS IN THE MIDST OF THE RAMADAN. THIS IS USUALLY A VERY QUIET PERIOD, AND TRADITIONALLY MOST LOCAL LEADERS HEAD FOR THE SOMEWHAT COOLER ALTITUDES OF SOMALIA (USUALLY THE HARGEISA REGION, WHERE MANY DJIBOUTI SOMALIS HAVE FAMILY) OR THE MOUNTAINOUS REGION OF DJIBOUTI'S NORTHERN AFAR PLATEAU. THE PRESIDENT SPENDS A LOT OF TIME AT HIS PRIVATE RESIDENCE AT ARTA (1800 FEET HIGH, 20 MILES WEST OF DJIBOUTI CITY). ALTHOUGH THE TEMPERATURES THIS SUMMER ARE UNUSUALLY LOW FOR DJIBOUTI (SELDOM ABOVE 100 TO 105 DEGREES, F.) DUE TO UNSEASONAL UP-COUNTRY RAINS, MOST STORES ARE CLOSED IN THE AFTERNOONS AND THE CITY HAS LITTLE ACTIVITY AT ALL DURING THE RAMADAN.

4. ASKED THE WEHERABOUTS OF AHMED DINI, FORMER PRIME MINISTER, ABDALLAH KAMIL NOTED THAT DINI HAS BEEN IN CONTINUING RESIDENCE AT OBOCK, HIS NATIVE VILLAGE, SINCE HE RETURNED FROM HIS LENGTHY SOJOURN IN ETHIOPIA. KAMIL REPORTS THAT DINI'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES APPEAR AT A VERY LOW LEVEL. OBOCK IS NOT PARTICULARLY FERTILE GROUND FOR REVOLUTION, WITH THE ENTIRE QUOTE CIRCLE UNQUOTE OF OBOCK, INCLUDING THE TOWN, HAVING ABOUT 3000 INHABITANTS. THIS DESERTIC REGION PROBABLY HAS A POPULATION DENSITY LESS THAN ONE PERSON PER SQUARE MILE.

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5. REFLECTING UPON THE LATE JULY DEPARTURE FROM DJIBOUTI OF SULTAN ALI MIRAH, THE PRIME MINISTER INDICATED SATISFACTION ABOUT HIS LEAVING THE COUNTRY. FEW DJIBOUTI AFARS ATTACH MUCH IMPORTANCE TO ALI MIRAH, ACCORDING TO KAMIL, BECAUSE HE REPRESENTS A CAUSE WHICH HAS LITTLE HOPE IN FACE OF SUPERIOR ETHIOPIAN MILITARY FORCE. IN ANY CASE, ALI MIRAH WAS NEVER KNOWN AS AN ENLIGHTENED RULER AND FOR MOST AFARS, ONE DESPOT IS USUALLY AS BAD AS ANOTHER. KAMIL DID NOT BELIEVE THAT ALI MIRAH'S FORCED DEPARTURE WILL REBOUND ON SAUDI-DJIBOUTI RELATIONS. HIS INFORMATION INDICATES THAT EVEN PRINCE FAHD HAD BEGUN TO WEARY OF THE FAILING STRUGGLE OF THE ALI MIRAH CLAN AGAINST THE EPMG. KAMIL STATED BITTERLY THAT DJIBOUTI MINISTER OF JUSTICE ISMAIL ALI YOUSSEF DEPARTED THE COUNTRY WITH ALI MIRAH AND IS NOW BELIEVED TO BE IN MOGADISCIO. SO FAR AS KAMIL IS CONCERNED, THAT IS JUST ANOTHER PROOF THAT QIS MINISTER OF JUSTICE IS COMPLETELY IN THE POCKET OF THE SOMALIS.

6. PRPKE MINISTER KAMIL REFLECTED SATISFACTION AT THE CURRENT EFFORTS OF PRESIDENT ASSAN GOULED TO SECURE THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE AFAR PEOPLE. THE PRESIDENT MADE A BRIEF TOUR OF OBOCK, TADJOURAH AND DANDA, THE THREE PRINCIPAL TOWNS OF THE AFAR AREA OF THE

REPUBLIC OF DJIBOUTI, THNS PAST WEEK. KAMIL NOTED THAT THE TRIP WENT FAIRLY WELL, AND THAT THE SMALL CROWDS PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL ADMINISTRATORS WERE COURTEOUS IF NOT ENTHUSIASTIC.

7. FOLLOWING HIS COMMENT THAT THE PROCESS OF AFAR INTEGRATION AND THE EDUCATION OF THE PRESIDENT COULD GO FASTER WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF FRANCE AND "ITS FRIENDS, INCLUDING THE U.S.", THE PRIME MINISTER CHIDED THE FRENCH EMBASSY FOR ALLEGEDLY MANIFESTING AN ATTITUDE THAT THE AFAR PROBLEM WOULD EVENTUALLY GO AWAY. HE AGAIN RESTATED A THEME FAMILIAR TO MANY OF OUR TALKS--THAT THE AFARS MAY BE A DYING TRIBE, BUT THE DO NOT WANT TO BE REMINDED OF IT. WHEN PRESSED ON THIS THEME, THE PRIME MINISTER REFERRED TO THE 1500 TO 2000 DISSIDENT AFARS NOW AFFILIATED MORE OR LESS WITH THE M.P.L. AND U.N.I. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD NOT CONFIDENTIAL

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BE DIFFICULT FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO INVITE SOME 7400 OF THESE PEOPLE TO JOIN THE DJIBOUTI ARMY. HOWEVER, TO ACHIEVE THIS, HE EXPLAINED, IT WOULD TAKE PRESSURE FROM FRANCE "AND ITS FRIENDS" ON HASSAN GOULED TO BRING THIS INTEGRATION ABOUT. WHEN I REFLECTED ON FACT THAT FRENCH EMBASSY HAS BEEN HIGHLY INSTRUMENTAL IN COUNSELLING THE PRESIDENT ON IMPROVING RELATIONS WITH ETHIOPIA, KAMIL AGREED AND FINALLY ADMITTED THAT FRANCE AND U.S. HAD FOLLOWED A PRUDENT POLICY CONCERNING DJIBOUTI'S INTRINSIC ETHNIC PROBLEMS.

8. THE PRIME MINISTER PROVIDED A FEW INTERESTING COMMENTS ON THE OAU AND BELGRADE NON-ALIGNED MEETINGS. HE REMARKED THAT THE ONLY BAD TIME DJIBOUTI HAD RECEIVED AT OAU WAS IN OPENING SPEECH OF LIBYAN REPRESENTATIVE, WHICH SEVERELY CRITICIZED DJIBOUTI FOR MAINTAINING MILITARY RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE. HOWEVER, AFTER THIS THE LIBYANS CALMED DOWN, AND, AS IF TO MAKE UP FOR THEIR HARSH WORDS, WERE VERY HELPFUL TO DJIBOUTI AT BELGRADE NAM. ON THE MATTER OF CUBA AND ITS POSITION AS HOST FOR THE NEXT YEAR'S NAM, KAMIL STATED THAT THE NEWSPAPER REPORTS ABOUT THE CONFERENCE WERE COMPLETELY INCORRECT: THERE WAS NEVER THE LEAST QUESTION OF CHANGING THE LOCALE OF THE HAVANA SESSION.

9. COMMENT. IN A COUNTRY WHERE MOST OF THE LEADING POLITICIANS ARE HABITUAL PESSIMISTS, WE WOULD HAVE TO ASSESS ABDALLAH KAMIL'S PRESENT ESTIMATES OF DJIBOUTI SITUATION AS FAIRLY OPTIMISTIC.
CLARKE

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